United Nations S/2017/813

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 September 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 28 September 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to forward the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, prepared for the high-level Security Council open debate, entitled "Reform of United Nations peacekeeping: implementation and follow-up", held on 20 September 2017 (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gillian **Bird**
Permanent Representative

17-17171 (E) 031017

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 28 September 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

United Nations peacekeeping operations: reform of United Nations peacekeeping, implementation and follow-up

Statement by Julie Bishop, MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs

I thank Ethiopia for convening this debate and for its leading contribution to peacekeeping missions. Australia is pleased to co-sponsor the peacekeeping resolution put forward today.

Last week, I had the honour of attending a ceremony in Canberra to commemorate 70 years of Australian involvement in United Nations peacekeeping missions. On 14 September 1947, Australia was the first country to deploy military observers to the then Dutch East Indies to monitor and report on the ceasefire.

Since then, we have contributed to 20 other United Nations missions.

Today, peacekeeping is a flagship enterprise of the United Nations and one of the most important global investments in peace and stability.

Contemporary peacekeeping missions, however, face serious challenges.

They often operate in dangerous environments, made more unpredictable by the rise of non-State actors with access to more advanced weapons.

Peacekeepers from many nations are not always as well trained or equipped as they should be.

Also, as United Nations Members are well aware, there have been disturbing cases of misconduct by peacekeepers in the field.

Some important steps have been taken to address these challenges, including:

- The convening of peacekeeping pledging meetings over the past two years, which are generating more personnel and enabling support
- The development of the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, which provide a "best practice" guide to peacekeepers on this core obligation
- The introduction of a number of measures designed to hold accountable those who commit sexual abuse and provide better support for victims
- The adoption of the "sustaining peace" resolutions, which commit the United Nations system to make that a core objective in all its operations.

However, more needs to be done.

The review by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations in 2015 provided us with the blueprint for reform.

It stressed, in particular, that peacekeepers must be deployed as part of a broader political strategy, where the work of peacekeepers is supported by other tools, such as mediation, humanitarian support and planning for longer-term development.

We must continue to pursue this approach.

We also need improved scrutiny throughout the life of peacekeeping missions. The Security Council needs to ensure that the tasks mandated for each mission continue to be consistent with the political and operational realities on the ground.

I also highlight Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), which calls for the doubling of the number of women peacekeepers by 2020. Australia strongly supports this objective, having helped bring an unprecedented level of attention to this issue during our Security Council term of 2013/14.

Finally, we need high levels of performance and integrity from peacekeepers, underpinned by effective and accountable leadership.

Consistent with this, I encourage the United Nations to continue the mentoring programme it is piloting for heads and deputy heads of peacekeeping missions.

Australia continues to provide policy leadership and development, particularly in areas where we have expertise. We have, for example, gained valuable operational experience in our region during our missions in the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and the autonomous region of Bougainville.

To be chosen to lead a United Nations mission is an honour, while also being a tremendous challenge.

As Member States, we need to ensure that those chosen to lead are given all the support we can muster.

United Nations peacekeeping — which remains perhaps the most recognizable symbol of the United Nations throughout the world — must live up to the aspirations on which it was founded over 70 years ago and continue to be a beacon of hope to communities in conflict zones.